

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1. (Cancelled).
2. (Currently Amended) An Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) controller arranged to be coupled through at least one packet-based network to a plurality of remote telephone stations and one or more attendant telephone stations, the ACD controller comprising call reception logic that controls [[the]] establishment of telephone sessions between the remote telephone stations and the one or more attendant telephone stations;

wherein the call reception logic operates to receive call initiation signals from a particular one of the remote telephone stations; to monitor if an attendant availability parameter is met; if the attendant availability parameter is not met, to send at least one data information message to the particular remote telephone station via the at least one packet-based network; and, if the attendant availability parameter is met, to establish an audio channel between the particular remote telephone station and a particular one of the one or more attendant telephone stations, and

wherein the call reception logic further operates to query [[the]] capabilities of the particular remote telephone station prior to sending the data information message, a format for the data information message being determined based upon the capabilities of the particular remote telephone station.

3. (Currently Amended) An ACD controller according to claim 2, wherein the at least one packet-based network is an Internet Protocol (IP) network and the data information message is transmitted within an IP packet.

4. (Previously Presented) An ACD controller according to claim 2, wherein the call reception logic further operates to determine a waiting parameter to be presented to a user at the particular remote telephone station, the data information message comprising said waiting parameter.

5. (Original) An ACD controller according to claim 4, wherein the waiting parameter comprises a number corresponding to an order in which the call initiation signals were received from the particular remote telephone station with respect to other call initiation signals received from other ones of the remote telephone stations.

6. (Currently Amended) An ACD controller according to claim 4, wherein the waiting parameter comprises an estimate of [[the]] a time before the attendant availability parameter will be met.

7. (Currently Amended) An ACD controller according to claim 4, wherein the call reception logic further operates to update the waiting parameter periodically until the attendant availability parameter is met and to send further data information ~~signals~~ messages comprising updated waiting parameters to the particular remote telephone station via the packet-based network until the attendant availability parameter is met.

Claims 8-36. (Cancelled).

37. (New) An Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) center, comprising:

one or more attendant telephone stations; and

an ACD controller arranged to be coupled through at least one packet-based network to a plurality of remote telephone stations and the one or more attendant telephone stations, the ACD controller comprising call reception logic that controls establishment of telephone sessions between the remote telephone stations and the one or more attendant telephone stations;

wherein the call reception logic operates to receive call initiation signals from a particular one of the remote telephone stations; to monitor if an attendant availability parameter is met; if the attendant availability parameter is not met, to send at least one data information message to the particular remote telephone station via the at least one packet-based network; and, if the attendant availability parameter is met, to establish an audio channel between the particular remote telephone station and a particular one of the one or more attendant telephone stations; and

wherein the call reception logic further operates to query capabilities of the particular remote telephone station prior to sending the data information message, a format for the data information message being determined based upon the capabilities of the particular remote telephone station.

38. (New) An ACD center according to claim 37, wherein the at least one packet-based network is an Internet Protocol (IP) network and the data information message is transmitted within an IP packet.
39. (New) An ACD center according to claim 37, wherein the call reception logic further operates to determine a waiting parameter to be presented to a user at the particular remote telephone station, the data information message comprising the waiting parameter.
40. (New) An ACD center according to claim 39, wherein the waiting parameter comprises a number corresponding to an order in which the call initiation signals were received from the particular remote telephone station with respect to other call initiation signals received from other ones of the remote telephone stations.
41. (New) An ACD center according to claim 39, wherein the waiting parameter comprises an estimate of a time before the attendant availability parameter will be met.

42. (New) An ACD center according to claim 39, wherein the call reception logic further operates to update the waiting parameter periodically until the attendant availability parameter is met and to send further data information message comprising updated waiting parameters to the particular remote telephone station via the packet-based network until the attendant availability parameter is met.
43. (New) An ACD center according to claim 37, wherein the at least one packet network comprises a local area network coupling the ACD controller and the one or more attendant telephone stations.
44. (New) An ACD center according to claim 37, further comprising one or more attendant console devices, each of the one or more attendant console devices associated with one of the one or more attendant telephone stations.

45. (New) A method of operating an Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) center comprising an ACD controller coupled through at least one packet-based network to a plurality of remote telephone stations and one or more attendant telephone stations, the method comprising controlling establishment of telephone sessions between the remote telephone stations and the one or more attendant telephone stations by:

receiving call initiation signals from a particular one of the remote telephone stations;

monitoring if an attendant availability parameter is met;

if the attendant availability parameter is not met, sending at least one data information message to the particular remote telephone station via the at least one packet-based network;

if the attendant availability parameter is met, establishing an audio channel between the particular remote telephone station and a particular one of the one or more attendant telephone stations; and

querying capabilities of the particular remote telephone station prior to sending the data information message, a format for the data information message being determined based upon the capabilities of the particular remote telephone station.

46. (New) A method according to claim 45, wherein the at least one packet-based network is an Internet Protocol (IP) network and the data information message is transmitted within an IP packet.

47. (New) A method according to claim 45, further comprising determining a waiting parameter to be presented to a user at the particular remote telephone station, the data information message comprising the waiting parameter.

48. (New) A method according to claim 47, wherein the waiting parameter comprises a number corresponding to an order in which the call initiation signals were received from the particular remote telephone station with respect to other call initiation signals received from other ones of the remote telephone stations.

49. (New) A method according to claim 47, wherein the waiting parameter comprises an estimate of a time before the attendant availability parameter will be met.

50. (New) A method according to claim 47, further comprising:

 updating the waiting parameter periodically until the attendant availability parameter is met; and

 sending further data information messages comprising updated waiting parameters to the particular remote telephone station via the packet-based network until the attendant availability parameter is met.